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MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Regulatory Reform

From: Andy Deloney
Director, Public Affairs

Date: June 28, 2005

Re: House Bill 4959 (Ward): Direct Shipment of Wine

On behalf of the more than 4,500 members of the Michigan Restaurant Association, I write to inform you that we must oppose House Bill 4959 as introduced.

Michigan restaurants have had a long cooperative relationship with Michigan wineries. Many restaurants like to emphasize to their guests – and their potential guests – that they offer or feature locally-produced foods, beverages and ingredients. Through these efforts, they have helped to put foods and beverages from local producers on the map. This is certainly the case with Michigan wines, which have gained in number, quality and popularity over the last several years. As these wines have gained recognition, the demand for them has grown, especially in Michigan restaurants.

For many decades under Michigan law, Michigan restaurants have enjoyed the ability to have wines, produced by Michigan wineries, shipped directly to them. Under the legislation as introduced, in the amended Section 113(9), this ability would end, simply by changing the definition of “wine maker.” Without the ability to receive directly-shipped wines, many Michigan restaurants would no longer be able to carry numerous locally-produced wines that are not otherwise available to them. If the legislation, as introduced, was to pass, not only would our ability to offer wines not available through the traditional distribution process end, but so would a large part of our ability to help increase knowledge and appreciation for wines produced by small Michigan businesses, especially fledgling wineries seeking to gain a foothold in the market.

We respectfully request your opposition to HB 4959.

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